

certainly the species in question. The term *cirrhat*us has already been used for this bird by Prof. Cabanis (cf. Schomb. Reise Brit. Guian. iii. p. 687, & Mus. Hein. ii. p. 16).

I may be allowed here to remark that the bird from Santa Marta which belongs to a closely allied species to *T. cirrhat*us, or perhaps should be termed a subspecies, is not entitled to bear the name *T. leucauchen*, Sel. (originally described as from the Upper Amazons), but that of *pulchell*us, Cab. et Heine, Mus. Hein. ii. p. 16 (well described from Cartagena). *T. pulchell*us differs from *T. cirrhat*us in possessing a bright rufous back, more white in the otherwise black head, and a rusty suffusion on the flanks, and in showing a continuous white outer web on the outer tail-feathers (up to the white end). Venezuelan examples are somewhat intermediate between *T. cirrhat*us and *T. pulchell*us, but agree better with the former.

The differences of *T. pulchell*us are not pointed out in the description of *T. leucauchen*, Sel.; and as *T. cirrhat*us is also mentioned from the Upper Amazons by Selater and Salvin (P. Z. S. 1873, p. 273, sub *T. atricapillo*), I believe that *T. leucauchen* will prove to be only a synonym of it*.

On the other hand, *T. albinuchalis*, Selater, from Ecuador and Northern Peru (given also from New Granada by Cab. et Heine), is a very distinct and fine species, in no way to be confounded with *T. cirrhat*us. There is a third species, allied to *T. cirrhat*us, found at Bahia by the Prince of Wied, viz. *T. cristatus*, which is evidently well marked, but seems not to have been met with since its discovery by that illustrious traveller.

XVIII.—*Ornithological Letters from the Pacific*.—VII. *Nawodo (Pleasant Island)*. By OTTO FINSCH, Ph.D.,
H.M.B.O.U., &c.

Pacific Ocean, on board the German steamer
'Pacific.' July 29, 1880.

IT is my privilege to be today among the innumerable

* [*T. leucauchen* (from Upper Amazonia) is much nearer to *T. pulchell*us than to *T. cirrhat*us; and if (as it seems to us) *T. leucauchen* and *T. pulchell*us are barely separable, the species must go by the former name, as oldest.
—EDD.]

islands of the Pacific in a spot, which, so far as I know, has never been visited before by any naturalist. This is the small island Nawodo (Onawero), as the natives call it, or "Pleasant Island" of the whalers and other mariners, situated in (according to Findlay's Directory) $0^{\circ} 25' \text{ S. lat.}, 167^{\circ} 5' \text{ E. long.}$ Although discovered as early as 1795 by Capt. Fearn, there exists no chart of this island, the circumference of which is estimated to be about fifteen miles. We sighted Pleasant Island at daybreak on July 24th; and by the kindness of Capt. HERNSHEIM, partner of the well-known firm "HERNSHEIM & CO.," with whom I had the pleasure of travelling on board his steamer 'Pacific,' I was allowed to go on shore and, more than that, to make a trip into the interior. Pleasant Island is quite different from all the low coral islands I had previously seen, and, although throughout of coral formation, is considerably elevated, reaching an altitude of about 100 to 120 feet. The island is surrounded by a reef, which apparently is of the same formation as the island itself, and has been elevated at the same time by submarine energy. It is hilly, and shows some picturesque wall-like rocks, about 20 to 30 feet high, which, like all the rest of the island, consist of coral. There is a rich vegetation, chiefly of cocoanut-trees, intermingled with *Pandanus* and some other trees and scrub, which gives the interior a garden-like appearance, quite different from that of the low islands. In the centre of the island is a fresh-water lagoon, which I visited; but I found it to be merely a small lake, the water of which must have connexion with the ocean, as it rises and falls with the tides. During my short visit of only six hours I observed only five species of birds, namely *Calamohерpe syrinx*, *Strepsilas interpres*, *Anous stolidus*, *Gygis alba*, and *Tachypetes aquilus* (sive *minor*). I was surprised not to find *Charadrius fulvus*, *Actitis incana*, or *Ardea sacra*, species which may be, as a rule, expected to be met with in all the coral islands, and which I am convinced must occur also on this small island.

Among the small number of birds observed by me, *Calamohерpe syrinx* is, no doubt, the most interesting; for I think there can be scarcely any other locality where this little

songster is so plentiful. As I wrote you in a former letter, this species adapts itself to very different localities. In Ponapé it is a true Reed-warbler, confined to the reed-swamps, and building its nest in the reeds, in the same manner as our *Calamoherpe turdoides*. In Ruk and the Mortlocks *Calamoherpe syrinx* leads an arboreal life, and nests in trees, as also is the case on Nawodo, where swampy grounds and reeds are absent. As I have remarked already, this species is very common in Pleasant Island—as common as the House-Sparrow in England. It lives singly or in pairs, and keeps, like its congeners, hidden in the thick foliage of trees or the bush. But you may hear its song everywhere, both from the highest cocoanut-palms or other trees and in the dense foliage of the lowly *Pandanus*, or even in the lowest scrub. The singing male loves to rest on a dry twig of a high branch, and is not at all shy. When disturbed it only takes a short flight to one of the next trees or bushes, where it recommences immediately its interrupted song. Although *Calamoherpe syrinx* is reputed one of the best singing birds of the Pacific, I must confess that I found its song far inferior to what I had expected. It is intermediate between that of the true Reed-Warbler and a *Phylloscopus* (e. g. *P. trochilus*), but lacks the continuous melodious notes which make the song of our *C. turdoides* so agreeable. On the other hand, *C. syrinx* has not those harsh-sounding notes which are so significant in our *C. turdoides*, chiefly at the commencement of its song. *C. syrinx* breeds on the island; and I got fresh eggs, although the greater part of the specimens obtained by me were in moult. This species feeds on insects, chiefly Libellulidæ, which are the commonest among the few insects of the island.

Gygis alba also belongs to the breeding-birds of Pleasant Island; for I got a freshly hatched young bird, in the singular, quite Tern-like, down plumage.

Anous stolidus and *Streptilas interpres* I saw only as pets near the huts of the natives. The latter bird seems to be highly esteemed by the natives, who keep them singly or in pairs in nicely made cup-shaped cages. The reason for keeping these birds is very peculiar, and was quite new to

me, as it will be perhaps to most of my ornithological friends. Here the Turnstone is used solely for fighting-purposes, just as fighting-cocks used to be in England! Still more astonishing is what I observed of the Frigate-bird, or rather in regard to its capture; for "bird-lassooing," I suppose, has never been yet recorded, and will be a novel sport to nearly all readers of 'The Ibis.' This sport seems to be a privileged amusement of the chiefs of Pleasant Island, and is followed only during the month of July, apparently in accordance with a certain migration of this species during that season. My attention was called first to a large bower or shelter, about 7 to 8 feet high and 20 feet long, made of sticks and some green trees, which were partially cut down, but were still growing and covered with leaves. On this bower were placed eight living *Tachypetes*, apparently perfectly tame; for I could not make out that they were fastened by a cord. These tame specimens serve as decoys, and attract the wild individuals who pass by the reef where the bower stands. The bower is always erected near to the shore, so that it may be seen at a great distance at sea. The bird-catchers are ever on the watch to be ready in case a straggler should make its appearance. These men are "tabooed" during the time of their duties in this sport, and may do no other work. They get their food separately cooked, and may not have intercourse with women. The sole apparatus for catching the Frigate-bird is, as I said before, a sort of lasso, consisting of a fine cord of cocoanut-fibre, 70 to 80 feet long, on which a "bola," of long conical form, about 3 inches long, made of shell (*Tridacna gigas*) or iron, is fastened. As soon as a wild bird approaches the stand where the decoys sit, the bird-catcher watches it with the greatest care, endeavouring to hide himself under the leaves of the trees. In wide revolving lines of flight the *Tachypetes* (the best and most elegant flyer of the Pacific) comes nearer and nearer, hovering by and by above and near to its tame comrades, but without resting in their company. Apparently it does not care for the dark-skinned native, although it may see him. Anyhow the bird-catcher is more careful than the bird, and taking a shot when

the latter skims along just above his head, like a flash of lightning throws his bola above the bird, which, entangled in the cord, falls and becomes his prey. The captured bird is fastened by a cord around the wings and placed on the platform of the bower among the other victims of this sport. As far as I could ascertain, the natives make no peculiar use of the birds, and the only prize of the sport seems to be the possession of the greatest number of these birds, which is considered as a privilege and attribute of chieftainship. One of the chiefs was bent on getting sixty Frigate-birds alive, and required only one dozen to make up the number, thirty having been captured for him by one bird-catcher and eighteen by another.

If I find time I will give you a further account of this peculiar mode of catching birds ; but I must finish now, as my attention is absorbed by the view of the glorious mountainous coast of the Solomon Islands, along which we are now steaming, and which is, of course, a country of great promise to a naturalist.

XIX.—*Notes on a Collection of Birds from the Marquesas Islands.* By H. B. TRISTRAM, F.R.S.

I HAVE lately received a jar of birds from the Marquesas Islands in spirits ; and so little is known of the avifauna of that the most distant group of the Pacific, that a few remarks on this collection may have some interest for my brother ornithologists.

The collection contains twenty-nine specimens of fourteen species, most of them well known as natives of these islands. Of the fourteen only four are land-birds ; and the rare and curious Pigeons, *Ptilopus mercieri*, *Serresius galeatus*, and *Caloenas rubescens*, are, I regret to say, not represented.

1. *CORIPHILUS SMARAGDINUS*, Hombr. & Jacq.

There are four specimens of this gorgeous little Parrot. Unfortunately, as comparison with a few skins in my collection shows, their sojourn for nine months in a jar of spirits